

## The Crease and Stumps

The crease and stumps are two aspects of the game, which haven't changed since the game was formed. There have been slight modifications but no major changes. The crease and stumps lie in the centre of the field.

### The Crease

There are three creases used in the modern game and are all marked in white lines:

- The first of the three being the **bowling crease**. This line is 8ft 8in long and has three stumps dug into it in the middle.
- The second being the **popping crease**. This line is 4ft in front of the bowling crease and is unlimited in length, although only 6ft of it is marked. The popping crease has three purposes:
  - It marks the batsman's 'ground',
  - It also marks the point where the bowler can't over step when bowling (part of his/her foot has to be on or behind the line).
  - And it also marks the line in which the batsmen must ground their bat when running between the wickets to score a run.
- And the final crease being the **return crease**. This line is marked at right angles to the other creases. Its purpose is to indicate to the bowler that his back foot must not cut the line during a delivery.

### The Stumps

Since the game was found there has always been three stumps, leg, middle and off. Which is which depends if the batsman is left-handed or right-handed. Each stump must be 28in in length above ground and all three must be evenly spaced out within 9in. Sitting on top of these stumps in grooves are two bails.

### The Bat

Cricket first became popular in the mid-eighteenth century. And since then the bat has been through many changes. It first started of as a wielded, curved piece of wood and but as the nineteenth century was approaching so was the end of the more traditional bats. These more 'traditional' bats were replaced by a rather more flimsy looking piece of wood. And have held their ground since, for 100 years.

Although, up to now the style of cricket bats haven't changed like of one's occurred in the early nineteenth century. However there have been a few modifications showing cricket has moved on. By 1970 manufacturers starting producing thicker and heavier bats, along with this came legal gimmicks pioneered to go in the batsmen's favour. Probably the most successful one of the lot was the 'scoop' manufactured by Grey Nicholls. The 'scoop' was an



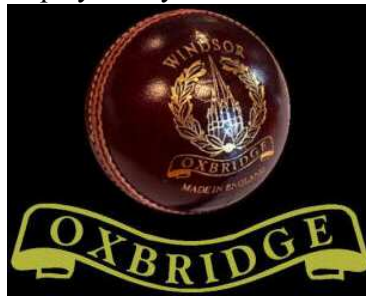
area of the back of the batsman's bat, which had been carved to improve balance and widen the sweet spot. The sweet spot is also more commonly known as the middle of the bat, located 6in from the toe of the bat and is often the thickest part of the bat. Other popular gimmicks included peppering little holes onto the bat for balance, designed by manufacturers, Duncan Fearnley.

There are very few laws for a legal bat but ironically enough there are no restrictions on the weight of the bat. The most common weight of a batsman's bat is 2lb 6oz. However the bat must not exceed 38in in length including the handle and must not be more than 4¼ in in width. And finally it must also only be made out of wood (willow).

Nowadays nearly every batsman has a tailored bat. This means that they have a bat made specifically for them. If it means cutting of pieces of the bat, then so be it. Batsmen also don't only have one bat. On average they use up to 5 different bats in every game. But each batsman has a favourite among them, which they take very good care of.

### **The Ball**

A legal test ball is made of red leather with the interior core made of cork and also has a flax seam. It weighs no more than 5½ oz. In test cricket a new ball is available for the captain to take after every 80 overs. However the captain does not have to use it straight away and might delay taking it if his bowlers are using the old ball well. This has become more common in modern test cricket. But if a ball comes apart or goes out of shape then the ball may be replaced if the umpires are not happy with it. It is legal to use saliva or swear to help polish the ball, but anything else like sun cream for example is forbidden and the player may face bans or fines for ball tampering.



There are many manufacturers of balls used specifically for test cricket. Dukes being the most popular cricket ball used in this cricket as it keeps its shine longer. In Australia, being the Kookaburra ball, which has a prouder seam. In the sub-continent, being Indian made balls, which are harder wearing balls. Each ball is suited to each country's climate.

Before the start of play on the first day of the test match and after the two captains have tossed, the umpires present a box of cricket balls to the captain of the fielding side, for him to choose one to start play. When deciding he may be accompanied by his first choice bowler.

### **Equipment**

Equipment used in modern cricket to either bat or field.



## How Runs are Scored?

- A batsman is given a run every time he successfully crosses the popping crease from one end to the other. As long as he has grounded his bat, otherwise that run would not be offered.
- If the ball carries to the boundary four runs will be awarded to the batsman.
- If the ball carries over the boundary without bouncing then six runs will be awarded to the batsman.
- One run shall be awarded for either a no-ball, wide and five if the ball hits an item of clothing or equipment of the fielding side.
- A run is also awarded if a lost ball is called. But this is very rare nowadays.

## Eleven Ways of Being Out

Unless a batsman is clean bowled or isn't obviously out. The fielding side need to appeal to the umpire for batsman to be given out.

Below are the eleven ways of getting out:

- **Bowled** – When the ball going straight onto the stumps or via the batsman breaks at least one bail.
- **Caught** – When the ball that comes off the bat or the glove holding the bat is caught by a fielder before it touches the ground.
- **Leg Before Wicket (LBW)** – When the ball is blocked by the pad without coming off the bat first. This is only given out by the umpire if he thinks the ball would have gone on to hit the wickets and if it didn't pitch on or outside leg stump. But for there to be any chance of a dismissal the fielding side must appeal to the umpire. This is known to be the most complex law in cricket. That's why if the umpire is in any doubt he must give the batsman the benefit.
- **Stumped** – When the bails are removed by the wicket keeper when the batsman has advanced out of the popping crease. For this to be given out the ball must be in the keeper's gloves when the bails are broken. Along with this should be an appeal.
- **Run out** – When the wicket is broken before the batsman has reached his ground when attempting to make a run.

The above dismissals are the five most common ways of getting out.

- **Hit wicket** – When the wicket is broken by the batsman himself.
- **Handled the ball** – When a batsman obstructs the ball from reaching the stumps using his hands.
- **Double hit** – When the batsman is judged to have gained advantage by hitting the ball twice.
- **Obstructing the field** – When a batsman prevents a fielder from taking a catch.



The remaining two dismissals below are very rare in cricket:

- **Timed out** – When a new batsman doesn't arrive in the middle within three minutes of the last wicket.
- **Retired out** – When a batsman is forced to withdraw from his innings through injury. However if he recovers from his injury he can come back in to complete his innings on the fall of the next wicket.

## Umpiring

Like in many sports someone gifted in the knowledge and experience of the sport is needed to keep things under control. But what makes cricket different to other sports is that there isn't just one member of authority on the pitch. For the last 250 years or so two have kept an eye on duals between two teams. Both are around for different purposes. One will stand behind the stumps, facing the batsman on strike from the bowlers end. His job is to judge no balls, wides, lbws, catches and fine snicks to the keeper or anyone else in the slip coordinate. The second umpire stands in the square leg position. He may have to adjust to accommodate both right and left-handed batsmen. His job is to judge no-balls, stumpings, run-outs and anything else that would require a front on view. And as technology continues to advance forward, more pressure starts to build on these umpires to use video technology to their aid in decision making, as the third-umpire becomes compulsory at Test match level. The job of the third-umpire is to help aid the umpires out in the square in their decision making using video technology. They usually come into action when an umpire isn't sure about run-outs and catches. But nowadays they also come into action when a fielder just stops the ball going for a boundary. And planning is going on if they should use T.V monitored replays to judge lbws. If such an action is passed by the International Cricket Council then the future of umpiring becomes very uncertain. And a match referee is also involved in the modern game. Like the third-umpire he has to sit in a small cubicle above the ground. His job is to write a report on the game after the match. He can also write reports on a players' behaviour, which can lead to suspensions from actions such as showing decent to the umpires. So much controversy has come into the modern game these days that thought of instating the fourth-umpire is becoming very likely. Up till now they have only been used as a reserve.

The most famous umpire out of the lot is probably Harold 'Dickie' Bird. He is known for his passion for the sport, but not only this makes you the best in the world. He's kept charge of 66 Test matches more than any other umpire in the umpire.

Most successful umpires these days all started out as professional first-class players. And many have also played at international level, such as India's Umpire Venkat.

## Umpiring Signals

Below are the signals used by umpires in the modern game. These signals are used to communicate to players, scorers and us, the fans:

### Out

**Wide Ball**

**No-Ball**

**Dead Ball**

**Bye**

**Leg Bye**

**Short-Run**

**Boundary Four**

**Boundary Six**

**New Ball**

**Last Hour**

**Batting**

The whole purpose of batting is to make the most number of runs possible, losing a maximum of ten wickets.

The first thing a batsman does when arriving at the crease at the fall of the last wicket, no matter where in the order he is, is take guard. To do this he will hold his bat vertically up and ask the umpire his desired stump, which he'd like to cover. He will then mark the crease of the stump, which he is covering with his boots or bat. This mark is a sign for where to rest his bat. This helps them because it means they know the whereabouts of the wicket and don't need to keep looking back.

The most popular guards are 'two' (between middle and leg) and 'middle'.

It is vital for a batsman to always be surveying the field to have in mind where and where he shouldn't play the ball. Not only this but it could also help the batsman find out what type of ball is due.

A batting order is made up of the eleven players who are also going to be fielding. It consists of:

➤ **Opening Batsmen**

Opening the batting is definitely the most important partnership of the batting order. And the opening pair has great responsibility and pressure on them to bat through the first session, seeing off the opening bowlers and the threat of the new ball. And at the same time set a foundation so they and later batsmen to come can flourish.

Batsmen are obviously individuals, but opening the batting must be a partnership. It helps if the two batsmen play alike and can gel together.

Good International teams such as England, open with a right and left-handed combination to cause as much problems for the opening bowlers. As this disrupts any rhythm they are trying to establish. In an opening pair it is important to have a defensive batsman and a batsman who can keep the scorecard rolling. This would also cause a few concerns for the bowler, as they'd have to change tactics, now and again.

Like I mentioned earlier opening batsmen are not at the crease to score runs at a quick rate. In limited overs matches its different because they have another job to do, but in both cases they still have to protect the middle-order batsmen from the new ball.

➤ **Middle-Order Batsmen**

Middle order batsmen usually haven't got the sort of pressure as the opening pair has when coming out to face the bowlers, but it is important for them to stay put. A middle order batsman is a great person for you to model yourself over, as they are usually batsmen who are known for their prolific shots and high averages. It is important for them to be versatile, as they'd need to be aggressive and defensive. As they could end up in situations where have lost early wickets and need to stabilise the team or could be in a situation where they need the runs and have to go for it.

➤ **Lower-Order Batsmen and Tail-Enders**

Lower order batsmen make up the beginning of the tail. These batsmen might not be in the same class as the batsmen closer to the head, but lower order batsmen are usually the more gutsy batsmen of a team who can go out and win the match for them. They usually come in situations where very rarely they need to defend. They are there to make as many runs as possible before the tail-enders come in.

Tail-enders makes up the end of the order and is always bowlers. These batsmen have no real responsibility to get runs but it could help if they can.

## **Bowling**

### **Pace Bowling**

A fast-bowler's job is to take early wickets and not to let the opening batsmen get quick runs. They are often huge, tall men. It's important for a fast-bowler to be fired up before an innings to get his best out of him. Like slower bowlers a fast-bowler thrives for a wicket, and if he can get one, usually another one follows as his confidence has risen.

A good fast-bowler won't necessarily bowl fast all the time. A good fast bowler will try setting up the batsman with various deliveries using the conditions of the weather and pitch, and then send him the killer blow. Pakistan's Waqar Younis is probably the most deadly, with a strike rate of 42.23, which is like taking a wicket every 7 overs. This might amaze you, but actually during his time he was the most feared bowler.

At the beginning of the innings the captain usually has a huge task to decide on who will open the bowling attack and then, which end will they bowl from. Most of time the best two bowlers, usually the most fastest, will open the attack, and the faster out of the two will get preference of which end to bowl from.

When a bowler decides on what end to choose he has to take to account the pitch conditions and weather conditions. It becomes an easy job for the captain if he has opening pair who move the ball in opposite directions.

Fast bowlers are known to get injured very easily and that's why they need to stay fitter and careful then others. This is because there body takes enormous strain when running up to the crease, then coiling and release the ball with power and pace, all in one action.

The run up is a key part of a fast-bowlers delivery. To get maximum pace the fast-bowler must not have to look at the popping crease very much because then he wouldn't be concentrating on his target, the stumps. So to help him concentrate on the stumps as much as possible when running up, he marks out his run up. This also avoids giving away unnecessary extra in the form of no balls

The coil and spring is what makes a good fast bowling action. It doesn't really matter if you release the ball from a side-on position or a front-on position. From either position the explosiveness of fast bowling will put a lot of strain on the bowlers' body.

- **Right-arm fast**

- **Seam Bowling**

Seam bowlers are bowlers who work more on their moment of the pitch rather than in flight. Seam bowlers attempt to get the ball to land on the seam where it will hopefully 'jag' either from off towards leg or from leg towards off.

- **Off Cutter**

The ball pitches around the line of middle-stump. At this point the batsman and sometimes the bowler too has no idea of which way the ball will move or if it will go straight on instead. From where the bowler releases the ball either close to the stumps or wide of the stumps, can cause problems for the batsman as he usually decides looking at this, which way the ball would move. When the ball pitches on middle-stump the ball is supposed to go across towards leg and stays close to the batsman. This is bowled to lure the batsman into a shot he doesn't want to play. This is where a short-leg can come helpful to put that little bit more pressure on the batsman. This is more affective being bowled from around the wicket.

- **Leg Cutter**

This ball is exactly opposite to the off cutter, with the ball going the other way. But is probably more deadly, so that explains why it used more. This ball can be bowled from either side of the wicket, but most bowlers prefer to bowl this delivery over the wicket. After releasing the ball the ball



would land on the seam and around the line of off-stump. Like the off cutter the batsman also doesn't know which way the ball would move and usually judge it on where the ball is released from either from close to the stumps or wide of the stumps. Although this could sometimes form a decoy. The batsman would be expecting this ball to come back at him from off to leg (left to right) but ball would pitch and go wide of off stump drawing the batsman to take a edge to the slips or wicket keeper. That's why in Test cricket not many batsmen drive the ball on the off stump unless it's a bad delivery. This ball is sometimes referred to a 'jaffa' or a 'peach', which means an unplayable delivery.

The best seam bowler in the modern game is West Indies', Courtney Walsh. He is also currently leads the table for the most test wickets with.....

➤ **Swing**

Swing bowling is an art, which could differ from every match, everyday and even every ball. Some new balls would swing and be favourable to you or sometimes it wont and could be very expensive. Unlike seam bowling swing bowling mainly relies on movement in flight. Swing is bowled with a relatively new ball but looks pretty old, when the hardness has gone. One side is polished frequently after every ball, by every player on its way around the ring, back to the bowler, so it doesn't lose its shine. In normal conditions a ball with the shine on its right will move to the left and with the shine on the left the ball will move to the right. The more highly polished a cricket ball is one side the more it will swing.

➤ **Reverse Swing**

This became more regular in the last decade or so. When the ball reached the 40 over mark the side, which had been roughened throughout the innings, starts to make the ball swing in the direction of the shine. So if the ball had its shine on the right side it will move right and if it was on the left it will move left.

➤ **Outswing**

Outswing is also known as the away swing, where the ball like the leg cutter veers from right to left. A swing bowler would attempt to get the ball to land on the seam on around the line of off-stump. It would be bowled at a fullish length hoping to curve away from the bat and take the edge. Bowling this to a left-hander can be equally lethal if not more as the ball come back into the batsman.

➤ **The 'Bouncer'**

The 'Bouncer' is probably the most feared delivery in cricket. It pitches mid-wicket and rises up towards the batsman's jaw. It's supposed to make life uncomfortable for the batsman. But only two an over is allowed in Test cricket.

➤ **The 'Yorker'**

The 'Yorker' is the opposite of a 'Bouncer'. Whereas the 'Bouncer' would rise the 'Yorker' is meant to stay low and sneak under the bat. This is also a difficult ball to play. But the bowler has very little margin for error.

- **Left-arm fast**

Left-arm bowlers don't have many variations they can bowl and if a batsman survives the first few overs at his arrival to the crease he'd have sussed the deliveries. This is because a left-arm pace-man can only bowl the ball angling across to a right-handed batsman looking for an edge to the slip cordon. Right-handed batsmen can't be bowled by a left-arm quickie, as the ball coming across will go into the slips after pitching on the stumps. So for them to be bowled the ball would have to bowl on the leg-stump, which means the batsman can't be given lbw.

But the Pakistani bowlers in during the reign of Imran Khan, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis invented the ball, which swings back into the right-handed batsman from an off-stump line. Growing uncertainty within in the batsman to play a shot. Making left-arm bowling much more deadly. Most left-arm bowlers have sussed this delivery, but only the bowlers above can deliver great deliveries.

## **Spin Bowling**

Spin bowling is an old art which was bowled much more often in the past as there was much more specialists in the game. But present spin bowlers Shane Warne, Anil Kumble, Muttiah Muralitharan and Saqlain Mushtaq brought an end to this spin-bowling renaissance period. As spinners once again continue to become the biggest threat to a batsman. Nowadays it is pretty rare to see a test captain pick a team without a specialist spinner.

Below are the types of spinning bowling that exist up till the present day:

- **Right-arm spin**

- **Off-Spin**

Off-spin is a traditional skill, which makes the ball turn from off to leg (right to left). Off-spinners in the past preferred to bowl on damp, sticky pitches. But modern spin bowling has changed with time and nowadays off-spinners prefer to bowl on much drier wickets.

A typical field for an off-spinner used to have most the fielders on the leg-side in the way, which the ball is turning. But nowadays captains have started to place most his fielders on the off-side, as well as having three fielders in the ring and two in close. Three crucial fielders are:

- **Short leg**, which is there for the inside-edge, or ball ricocheting off the glove,
- **Silly point**, which is there for the possible bat-pad catch from a defensive block to the off-break,

- And the **slip** is there for the ‘arm ball’ that is liable to take the edge if the batsman hasn’t read the delivery properly.

➤ **The Off-Break**

The ways the off-break and the ‘arm ball’ are released when bowling are pretty similar from the batsman’s end, but when they pitch, they are very much different, but as equally deadly.

The off-break is spun using the first and second fingers. It also involves the wrist to rotate to the right with the seam spinning at right angles to the batsman. To produce the best possible spin the ball has to land on the seam. Usually the more you try to spin the ball, the more the ball will ‘dip’ in flight, which means the ball will land earlier than the batsman expects. However, this ‘dip’ scenario has been proved wrong by a spin wizard, Sri Lanka’s Muttiah Muralitharan. Who imparts so much spin the ball dips alarmingly late in flight.

➤ **The ‘Arm Ball’**

Most of the time it depends on the pitch for a spinner to decide, which delivery to use. If the pitch has a good grass covering or a glassy sheen, then using the off-break could be very expensive as it won’t necessarily spin, only marginally deviate. In these conditions the ‘arm ball’ becomes very helpful if bowled right. However, the ‘arm ball’ doesn’t turn. It’s not meant to. The ball is supposed to be floated off the first finger, with the seam-facing upright and with no spin imparted. This ball is used as the final ball when setting up the batsman, as the ball will go straight on when the batsman thinks it’s an off-break and will play for the turn. But if the ball has still got plenty of shine then the ball might actually swing away. This ball is also called the ‘drifter’, but is now more often called the ‘dusara’ by India’s latest spin maestro, Harabhan Singh.

➤ **The ‘Mystery Ball’**

The ‘Mystery Ball’ hasn’t been here for long and isn’t a ball, which many know how to bowl. It was developed by Pakistan’s, Saqlain Mushtaq, and others such as Muttiah Muralitharan and Harabhan Singh have also learnt how to bowl it. The brilliant thing about this ball is that it is bowled with an off-break action and release, but actually spins the other way. The difference the batsmen fail to realise between the two deliveries is that the ‘Mystery Ball’ is that it is bowled from the top of the hand rather than the front and also extra invert is put into the wrist.

➤ **Leg-Spin**

This probably the most exciting and devastating type of spin. Unlike off-spin and left-arm spin being called ‘finger spin’ because it uses the fingers to turn the ball, leg-spin turns the ball using its wrist. So therefore it is called ‘wrist spin’. As it’s probably the most devastating type of spin it is also a difficult delivery to learn to bowl.

Leg-spin was much more popular back in the early twentieth-century. Until it nearly died out of the game, but an Australian, Shane Warne,

rediscovered the art of leg-spin bowling. It is still thought that batsman are still vulnerable against leg-spin bowling like they were many years back in the early twentieth-century.

Leg-spin is bowled from the side of the hand and turns from leg to off (from right to left). It is important to have strong hands and an explosive action to make the most of the art. When the ball turns old this is when leg-spin can be most devastating as its humming seam dips in, late towards the batsman, before dropping and turning. An average leg-spin ball in Test cricket is bowled around 56mph.

➤ **The Googly**

The Googly is a variation to the leg-spinners orthodox leg-break delivery. It spins the opposite way of the leg-break, spinning from off to leg (from left to right). The only difference in the action out of the two bowls is that the googly is released out of the back of the hand. This makes it spin the other way.

• **Left-arm spin**

Left-arm spin is considered more dangerous than the orthodox off-spin as it spins away from the right-handed batsman (from right to left). However, the batsmen have developed a way to play them through England's captain, Nasser Hussain. Hussain just 'kicks away' the ball with the bat comfortably hidden behind the pad. But due to this left-arm spin has developed the dangerous 'magic ball'. This ball pitches in line with the leg stump and turns outwards towards off stump (from left to right), if it doesn't go onto hit off stump, then there's a very good chance of it threatening the edge of the bat.

As the most common dismissal in left-arm spin bowling is caught, it is vital to get the field setting right. Below is what an orthodox left-arm spinner's field would consist of:

- A **slip** is there for the 'magic ball' which would could take an edge,
- **Silly point** which is there for the possible bat-pad catch from a defensive stroke,
- **Short extra cover**, which is there for the uppish drive a batsman might play when under pressure,
- **Mid-on**, which is there to give chase to anything going for the boundary and also edges that might go up **into the air** for a catch,
- And **short fine leg**, this is there for the sweep, this is a risky shot to play and often gets edges going into the air.
- You would also need to have three **boundary fielders** on the off-side and one on the leg-side.

➤ **Chinaman**

The Chinaman delivery is a variation delivery of the left-arm spinner's normal delivery, which spins the opposite way, instead of spinning from leg to off (from right to left) it spins from off to leg (from left to right). It is identical or very similar to a right armers' leg-break.

➤ **Chinaman Googly**

The Chinaman delivery itself is very difficult to bowl and the Chinaman googly is much more difficult. It is a rare delivery a spinner would use, as it is very difficult to bowl. Many might be able to bowl it but not very well. If bowled very well it can cause a number of problems for the batsman. You are most likely to see this delivery bowled on the sub-continent. But the only regular sighting of this bowl is when Australia's part-time spinner Michael Bevan or South Africa's Paul Adam's gets a chance to bowl. A variation of this ball used is to bowl it out of the back-hand, which spins the same way as an orthodox left-arm spin.

➤ **Topper and Flippers**

The topper and flipper complete a leg-spinner's collection of devastating deliveries. This is why so many batsmen have difficulties playing leg-spinners. As most of the balls look very much identical in flight.

• **The Topper**

The topper is also known as the top-spinner. It looks like the leg-spinner and googly when in flight, but actually it's the ball that goes straight on, like the 'arm ball'. This ball usually gets extra bounce and comes off the batsman's glove or gets a top edge.

• **The Flipper**

The flipper is sometimes called a 'back spinner', but is released from the front of the hand. This ball goes straight on like the topper but stays low. Its often-bowled short and batsman would mistake for a long hop and move back for a cut, but instead it would stay low. Richie Benaud, the great Australian Leg-spinner, said "it took me four years to before he had the confidence to use it in a match".

**Fielding**

Fielding has now become a very important aspect of the modern game with the introduction of the limited overs game. In the past, cricket was either bowling or batting but fielding specialists such as Australia's Ricky Ponting and South Africa's Jaunty Rhodes can take wickets and win the match without batting or bowling.

Nowadays excellent fielding from the side boosts team moral and also gives an edge to the bowler that everyone is concentrating. It could also make a batsman play where he doesn't want to play. Usually the batsman would try avoiding playing to the side's specialist fielders.

The best fielders are usually put in the slip cordons or in close. But however fielders who are specialists at their position get first preference to where they want to field. The other more able fielders are placed in the ring to stop singles and take catches. But boundary fielders are almost nearly always bowlers. They're put out there so they can rest after there over but usually because they are less able fielders so it's best to keep them out of the action. Very rarely you'll see a boundary fielder put out there because they are specialists in that position.



## **Analysis on My Cricket**

In my own opinion I am a very able cricketer. I started as a right-arm fast bowler at Isleworth & Syon School for Boys'. I had a good action and bowled accurately and took a few wickets, although I was pretty expensive. But I kept taking wickets. After the first two games in year 7 our team came short of wicket keepers. And I was asked to step in. From then on I became a wicket keeper and took plenty of catches and stumpings. I consider myself to be a good opening batsman, but rarely get the chance to prove myself. As I continue to be used as a lower-order batsman. My top score is 52, playing as an opener for Isleworth & Syon. I have also learnt how to bowl spin during my time as a keeper.

My weakness in my batting is that I don't premeditate much. In year 7 when I first started playing against other teams in the county I was mainly a back-foot player and very rarely drove the ball straight or through the covers and instead played everything on the leg-side. But as I learnt how to play on the off-side I became a more front-foot player but now I don't pull or hook the ball much and want to play everything on the off-side which sometimes mean I play a shot showing all three of my stumps and sometimes this gets me into trouble.

Personally I have improved on my batting and have started to play the ball all over the pitch, but the only way I can improve is to get a chance to bat up the order because there's no point in batting in the nets if your not going to get the chance to see what stage your at.

My keeping well I have kept wicket for Isleworth & Syon for three years and then moved to Cranford where I wasn't considered as a keeper. In my first year I was rated the best keeper in the borough and also one of the best in the county. But the only thing that let me down that season was my batting. But still I got cricketer of the year in years 7 and 8 at Isleworth & Syon.

I don't think there is much I need to improve on my keeping as I know when to come up to the stumps and when to go back. And I follow the ball as it rises after it pitches. And I've also taken plenty of catches. But I believe the more practice I get on this the better ill get. I consider coming up to the stumps a strength. In Isleworth & Syon the books showed I took much more catches when I was up the stumps facing a spinner than when I stayed back facing a fast bowler. Stumpings is my speciality.

I consider myself to be a very tactical cricketer and will do very well as a captain. Like all captains they have both strengths and weaknesses. The only weakness I would consider is that I would see my fellow colleagues as friends and wont order them like I would if they weren't. But I still do get my point across and I have a winning attitude, and would do anything legal to win, because I don't like loosing.

## **Practice Sessions**

Below are four practice sessions that I could organise to work on and improve four different skills In order to improve and practice your skill, in my own opinion it is better to work in small groups for anything involving cricket if it is n't related to match fitness

Four Practice sessions, which I have used in the past to improve my skills:

➤ **Defensive Batting**

✓ **Warming Up**

Each person taking part in the exercise should warm up from head to toe loosening your muscles in particular the ones which you'd be putting more pressure on, such as, your neck, shoulders, hips, groin and legs.

Then start warming up with a bat and ball. It doesn't necessarily have to be what you want to improve. In most case I've just done some throwing, catching involving some running.

✓ **Main Session**

Have someone to bowl pace and spin at you in the nets and have them consistently bowling around off stump. But also have them varying their height and pace.

The batsman's objective it to either completely ground the ball or to practise leaving it.

You should do the same but on the middle-stump and leg-stump.

Spend about half an hour on each stump if good progress is being made. But if you feel you need a little more practise then bat for a little longer on your weak stumps.

Gradually start to bowl all over the wicket to see what you have achieved in the session. But please note the batsman's objective remains the same to either completely ground the ball or practise leaving the ball.

✓ **Warming Down**

It is vital after training for players to stretch and loosen his muscles in particular, which has been in use. But once again everything should be stretched from head to toe. This is to prevent small unnoticeable injuries on the pitch to aggravate of the pitch.

➤ **Offensive Batting**

✓ **Warming Up**

Each person taking part in the exercise should warm up from head to toe loosening your muscles in particular the ones which you'd be putting more pressure on, such as, your neck, shoulders, hips, groin and legs.

Then start warming up with a bat and ball. It doesn't necessarily have to be what you want to improve. In most case I've just done some throwing, catching involving some running.

✓ **Main Session**

Have someone to bowl pace and spin at you in the nets and have them consistently bowling around off stump. But also have them varying their height and pace.

The batsman's objective is to practise his scoring shots.

You should do the same but on the middle-stump and leg-stump.

Spend about half an hour on each stump if good progress is being made. But if you feel you need a little more practise then bat for a little longer on your weak stumps.

Gradually start to bowl all over the wicket to see what you have achieved in the session. But please note the batsman's objective remains the same to practise his scoring shots.

✓ **Warming Down**

It is vital after training for players to stretch and loosen his muscles in particular, which has been in use. But once again everything should be stretched from head to toe. This is to prevent small unnoticeable injuries on the pitch to aggravate of the pitch.

➤ **Wicket Keeping to Pace Bowlers**

✓ **Warming Up**

Each person taking part in the exercise should warm up from head to toe loosening your muscles in particular the ones which you'd be putting more pressure on, such as, your neck, shoulders, hips, groin and legs.

Then start warming up with a bat and ball. It doesn't necessarily have to be what you want to improve. In most cases I've just done some throwing, catching involving some running.

✓ **Main Session**

Start off with part of the session being indoors. Using mats let your coach throw catches to you, to which you have to dive to collect. Gradually your coach should start to throw the ball at you much more vigorously. You should do this exercise for about half an hour.

Once warmed up use the ball gun to shoot the ball at you in random areas at random speeds.

Once you've finished indoors you should turn to outdoors. Here you should ask your coach to bounce the ball into you. You should start in a crouched position and come rise as the ball does. This should be done off the square.

Then move onto the square and have a pace bowler bowling at an empty wicket but allowing the ball to go through to the wicket keeper. You should finish off with an exercise involving a couple of boundary fielders. Your coach should bat the ball out to them; they will field it and throw it back into you.

✓ **Warming Down**

It is vital after training for players to stretch and loosen his muscles in particular, which has been in use. But once again everything should be stretched from head to toe. This is to prevent small unnoticeable injuries on the pitch to aggravate of the pitch.

➤ **Wicket Keeping to Spin Bowlers**

✓ **Warming Up**

Each person taking part in the exercise should warm up from head to toe loosening your muscles in particular the ones which you'd be putting more pressure on, such as, your neck, shoulders, hips, groin and legs.

Then start warming up with a bat and ball. It doesn't necessarily have to be what you want to improve. In most case I've just done some throwing, catching involving some running.

✓ **Main Session**

Start of with part of the session being indoors. Using mats let your coach throw catches to you, to which you have to dive to collect. Gradually your coach should start to throw the ball at you much more vigorously. You should do this exercise for a bout half an hour. Once you've finished indoors you should turn to outdoors. Here you should use the ball gun to shoot the ball at a curved piece of metal that changes the direction of the ball so it brings up unpredictability using random speeds. Then ask your coach to bounce the ball into you. You should start in a crouched position and come rise as the ball does. This should be done off the square. Then move onto the square and have a spin bowler bowling at an empty wicket but allowing the ball to go through to the wicket keeper. It is vital the bowler bowls a variation of different spin and for the wicket keeper to stand up to the stumps. Towards the end it would be helpful to get a batsman in so the wicket keeper can practise premeditating where the ball would go if the batsman blocks his view. You should finish off with an exercise involving a couple of boundary fielders. Your coach should bat the ball out to them; they will field it and throw it back into you hopefully into the stumps, try to keep the ball of the ground.

✓ **Warming Down**

It is vital after training for players to stretch and loosen his muscles in particular, which has been in use. But once again everything should be stretched from head to toe. This is to prevent small unnoticeable injuries on the pitch to aggravate of the pitch.

**Four Skills**

Below are four skills described in detail of how to use the skill (for a right-handed batsman):

➤ **The Cover Drive**

If you have just arrived at the crease ask for your mark and mark the ground with either your bat or spikes. Put one foot either side of the popping crease and make sure the tip of your toes are placed on your mark. Place your bat beside the back foot and look up. Make sure before you begin to bat, your grip on the handle of the bat should form a 'v'. Keep your lower body up right and your upper body slightly bent over the bat. As the bowler starts his run up, you start to pat the bat gently on the ground. At the same time you should keep your eyes parallel to the ground and your head up right. As the ball is released keep your eyes on the ball and premeditate to where the ball would pitch. Lift your bat up waist height and move your front foot across the stumps and place it to where you think the ball is going to pitch. As the ball gets close to pitching slowly bring your bat down from waist height and through to hit the ball with your left elbow pointing out towards the bowler. As you come to hit the ball through the covers open the face of the bat to control the shot. Please note the ball should be played under your eye line and you shouldn't push out for the ball as it could result in an edge going into the slip cordons. Your follow through shouldn't through all the way; your top hand's wrist should roughly be around your forehead.

➤ **The Square Cut**

If you have just arrived at the crease ask for your mark and mark the ground with either your bat or spikes. Put one foot either side of the popping crease and make sure the tip of your toes are placed on your mark. Place your bat beside the back foot and look up. Make sure before you begin to bat, your grip on the handle of the bat should form a 'v'. Keep your lower body up right and your upper body slightly bent over the bat. As the bowler starts his run up, you start to pat the bat gently on the ground. At the same time you should keep your eyes parallel to the ground and your head up right. As the ball is released keep your eyes on the ball and premeditate to where the ball would pitch. Lift your bat up waist height and move your front foot across, left on to the leg-stump, and move the back foot closer to the stumps. As the ball gets close to pitching slowly raise your bat from waist height to a more baseball position with the blade of the bat open faced to point. As the bowl rises up towards you lean back and play a more baseball like shot. As you come to hit the ball through the gully area close the face of the bat so it ends up facing the ground. This would control the shot. Please note the ball should be played under your eye line and you shouldn't push out for the ball as it could result in an edge going into the slip cordons. Your follow through shouldn't through all the way. The blade of the bat should end up facing the bowler.

➤ **The Lofted-Off-Drive**

If you have just arrived at the crease ask for your mark and mark the ground with either your bat or spikes. Put one foot either side of the popping crease and make sure the tip of your toes are placed on your mark. Place your bat beside the back foot and look up. Make sure before you begin to bat, your grip on the handle of the bat should form a 'v'. Keep



your lower body up right and your upper body slightly bent over the bat. As the bowler starts his run up, you start to pat the bat gently on the ground. At the same time you should keep your eyes parallel to the ground and your head up right. As the ball is released keep your eyes on the ball and premeditate to where the ball would pitch. Lift your bat up waist height and take a quick couple or so strides (more like hops) to where the ball would pitch. As the ball gets close to pitching slowly bring your bat down from waist height and through to hit the ball with your left elbow following through with the bat and ending u pointing out towards square leg. As you come to hit the ball over the top of the bowler and into the stands for six lean backwards slightly and from then on just use your sheer, brutal force. A balance in your quick strides and follow through will determine the control of your shot. Please note the ball should be played under your eye line and you shouldn't push out for the ball as it could result in an edge going into the slip cordons. Your follow through should end up roughly in the same position as the square cut but with your front foot much more forward.

➤ **The Pull**

If you have just arrived at the crease ask for your mark and mark the ground with either your bat or spikes. Put one foot either side of the popping crease and make sure the tip of your toes are placed on your mark. Place your bat beside the back foot and look up. Make sure before you begin to bat, your to grip on the handle of the bat should form a 'v'. Keep your lower body up right and your upper body slightly bent over the bat. As the bowler starts his run up, you start to pat the bat gently on the ground. At the same time you should keep your eyes parallel to the ground and your head up right. As the ball is released keep your eyes on the ball and premeditate to where the ball would pitch. As the ball gets close to pitching slowly raise your bat from waist height to a more baseball position with the blade of the bat open faced to point. As the bowl rises up towards you lean back and move your back foot across, right on to the off-stump, and move the front foot closer to the leg-stump, and swing the bat across your body so the ball goes for four runs. The ball should roughly end up in front of square leg. After you've hit the ball through square leg the bat should have ended up by your waist with you're the blade of the bat closed so it ends up facing the ground. This would control the shot. Please note the ball should be played under your eye line and you shouldn't push out for the ball as it could result in an edge going into the slip cordons.

### **My Cricketing Ideal**

Most people would think me being an Indian my favourite cricketer would be the no1 ranked master-blaster in the world, Sachin Tendulkar. But this is not at all true. But I have to confess my ideal is still an Indian and has been the most consistent batsman during the series between England and India, here in England, with an average of 77. Rahul Dravid in my opinion is the best timer of the ball anywhere else in the world. What makes him a great batsman to watch is that he spends a very long time out in the middle waiting for the bad ball to punish? He hasn't really got a



weakness like other batsman because anything over pitched on the off-side goes for four n anything played on the pads goes for four.

Rahul Dravid is mainly a front foot player and during this summer's clash with England, England tried to exploit this area by bowling outside his off-stump and luring him into the shot to take the edge to the slips. But out of his six innings they were only successful once, which shows how good his temperament is and that he fights hard for the team.

Not only is he a great batsman he is also one of the best first slips in the world. But in his cricketing career he has also kept wicket for the national side and is more and more nowadays in the limited overs game. Talking about the limited overs games Rahul Dravid is not a batsman who can only make slow runs in an unlimited overs game, but can also make match-winning runs in quick time. This was well presented with an array of centuries in the last world cup in England in 1999 where he got top-batsman of the cup and also top-batsman of the year.

